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ABSTRACT

Questionnaires were sent to 2,161 teachers and to administrators in 118 primary schools in the Brisbane North Region (Australia) to determine their attitudes toward the implementation of a new handwriting syllabus. The questionnaire also solicited information on educational experience, the importance of handwriting, the teaching of handwriting, and feelings about the current syllabus. Responses indicated that teacher demonstration on the blackboard and individual correction in books were the commonest methods used to teach handwriting. Although there was nearly unanimous agreement on the importance of children learning to write legibly, the importance attached to handwriting was uneven across subjects. A majority agreed that the current print style was easily mastered by children and that the current cursive style was not easily mastered and did not facilitate legibility at speed. Perceptions of the new syllabus ranged from full accord, to reserved judgment, to resigned acceptance. Projected organizational problems included multiple-age classes, working on the old and new scripts concurrently, confusion among parents, and unfamiliarity with the script. Questionnaires are appended. (HOD)

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Handwriting Implementation Project Study

Report #2

Reactions of the Target Teacher and Administrator Population Prior to Implementation

May 1985

Judyth Sachs

Lloyd Logan

This report by Judyth Sachs and Lloyd Logan is written for the research team of Jan Boys, Adrian Coulston, John Dwyer, Lloyd Logan and Judyth Sachs.

The research members pay the highest tribute to Adrian Coulston who was so tragically killed before this report was completed.

Department of Education

University of Queensland

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INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the Report

This is a report on the opinions of administrators and teachers in the Brisbane North Region towards the implementation of a new handwriting syllabus. The survey of teacher and administrator opinion on which this report is based was conducted in July 1984 before the in-school implementation had begun and before most teachers had seen the curriculum guidelines for the new program and forms part of a broader research project, the Handwriting Implementation Project Study (HIPS). The HIPS project was undertaken on behalf of the Language Arts Curriculum Committee and the Division of Primary Education in response to lack of information regarding the overall process of curriculum implementation and dissemination in Queensland. A report entitled Preparation for the Dissemination Phase published in August 1984 was the first of a series of reports for this study. This the second in the series documenting the implementation of the new handwriting syllabus, is concerned with attitudes towards the change in handwriting in Queensland immediately prior to the introduction of the new syllabus in year one. The data therefore provides a base line for further comparison in subsequent studies of the syllabus adaption.

2. Organisation of the Report

The report is organised into seven main sections:

A the sample

B general information

C teaching handwriting

D feelings about the importance of handwriting

E feelings about the current syllabus

F the new handwriting syllabus

G conclusions

Each section canvasses issues identified and considered significant from the data. The responses of teachers and administrators were gathered and processed separately, but for the purpose of clarity and continuity most of the sections listed above contain information provided by both groups as there was little difference in their responses.

SECTION A: SAMPLE

Questionnaires were sent to all teachers at primary schools in the Brisbane North Region. In all, the opinions of 2161 teachers in 116 primary schools were canvassed.

Over 1000 questionnaires were received. A quota sample was drawn from the teacher responses to adjust for variation in response rate from teachers at different classes of school (specifically, teachers at class two schools appeared to be over represented). As a result responses from class 1, 2 and 3 schools were randomly sampled to provide for a teacher/student ratio at those schools of approximately 1:100. All responses from administrators and teachers at class 3 and 4 schools were included (the numbers in this latter category being too small to warrant adjustment).

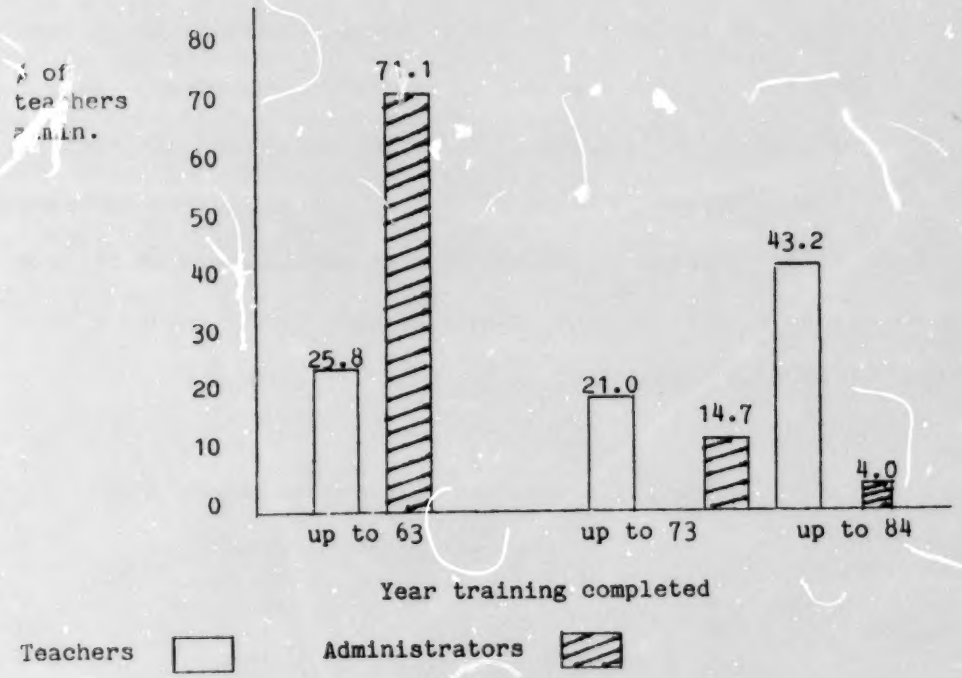
Table 1: Respondent by class of school

		Class of School					
		1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
Teacher	No.	252	165	70	33	6	526
	(%)	47.9	31.4	13.3	6.3	1.1	100.0
Administrators	No.	45	30	10	12	4	101
	(%)	44.6	29.7	9.9	11.9	4.0	100.0

SECTION B: GENERAL INFORMATION

Figure 1 indicates when teachers and administrators completed their initial training.

Figure 1: Teachers and administrators initial certification by year



An analysis of when teachers and administrators completed their initial training indicates that the majority (71.3%) of administrators completed their initial training prior to 1963. 25.8% of teachers were trained prior to that date with the majority (43.2%) being certified between 1974 and 1984. Table 2 indicates a breakdown of teachers' and administrators' qualifications.

Table 2: Teachers and administrators qualifications

Qualification	Teachers %	Administrators %
Certificate	25.9	27.2
Dip.Teaching	45.6	11.7
Dip.Ed.	5.9	2.9
B.Ed.	14.1	29.1
B.Ed.St.	4.4	14.6
Masters	0.4	1.0
Other	3.0	13.6

An analysis of the teacher and administrator qualifications indicates that the Diploma of Teaching (3 years) is most representative of teachers' qualifications. For administrators, the most common qualification is the Bachelor of Education. Nearly three quarters of the administrators have completed a further qualification since initial certification.

SECTION C: TEACHING HANDWRITING

1. Practices

Table 3 illustrates the degree common practices are currently used or advocated in the teaching of handwriting by teachers (T) and administrators (A).

Table 3: Common ways used to develop handwriting: all teachers and administrators

	BLACKBOARD DEMONSTRATION		CORRECTION IN BOOKS		COPY BOOKS		WALL CHARTS		CARDS		SHEETS	
	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A
NEVER	1.0	0	.4	0	59.8	33.3	19.5	23.8	60.0	57.1	30.6	23.8
SELDOM	7.1	13.6	2.2	4.5	10.6	19.0	22.2	19.0	18.2	23.8	20.6	23.8
SOMETIMES	21.6	13.6	22.8	22.7	10.0	23.8	28.8	28.6	16.3	19.0	30.8	28.6
OFTEN	34.1	54.5	46.8	50.0	14.2	14.3	19.8	28.6	3.8	0	12.5	19.0
ALOT	36.2	18.2	27.8	22.7	5.4	9.5	9.7	0	1.7	0	5.6	4.8

Blackboard demonstration and individual correction in books were the two most favoured teaching tactics. The use of copy books was supported more by administrators than teachers. Teachers however, strongly advocated practice books for children (see Table 4c) along with administrators.

Table 4 details the usage of specific tactics and aids in the lower, middle and upper years.

Table 4: Common ways to develop children's handwriting skills by year level

Table 4a: Blackboard

	LRT*	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER	
NEVER	0	0	0.2	.8	
SELDOM	0.2	0	1.6	5.3	
SOMETIMES	0.4	3.2	6.9	11.1	
OFTEN	0.6	15.2	11.9	6.5	
ALOT	1.4	24.8	6.7	3.2	
N	13	214	135	133	495
%	2.6	43.2	27.3	26.9	

Table 4b: Demonstration and correction in books

	LRT*	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER	
NEVER	0	0	0	0.4	
SELDOM	0	0.2	0.4	1.6	
SOMETIMES	0.9	4.2	8.9	9.5	
OFTEN	0.2	21.0	13.3	11.5	
ALOT	1.4	17.5	5.0	3.8	
N	13	213	137	133	496
%	2.6	42.9	27.6	26.9	

* LRT = Local relieving staff

Table 4c: Copy Books

	LRT*	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER	
NEVER	1.9	23.8	15.2	19.0	
SELDOM	0.2	4.6	2.1	3.8	
SOMETIMES	0	5.6	3.1	1.3	
OFTEN	0.4	6.3	5.2	2.3	
ALOT	0	2.9	1.7	0.8	
N	12	207	131	130	480
%	2.5	43.1	27.3	27.1	

Table 4d: Wall Charts

	LRT*	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER	
NEVER	0.6	5.1	4.9	8.8	
SELDOM	0.6	7.4	6.6	7.6	
SOMETIMES	0.8	12.8	8.4	6.8	
OFTEN	0.2	13.6	4.7	1.2	
ALOT	0.4	4.3	2.7	2.3	
N	13	210	133	130	486
%	2.7	43.2	27.4	26.7	

Table 4e: Cards

	LRT*	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER	
NEVER	1.7	18.2	17.8	22.4	
SELDOM	0.2	10.0	5.2	2.7	
SOMETIMES	0.4	10.5	3.3	2.1	
OFTEN	0.2	2.9	0.4	.2	
ALOT	0.2	1.0	0.4	0	
N	13	204	130	131	478
%	2.7	42.7	27.2	27.4	

Table 4f: Duplicated Sheets

	LRT*	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER	
NEVER	0.8	7.5	9.8	12.5	
SELDOM	0	7.7	7.1	5.8	
SOMETIMES	0.8	15.8	6.9	7.3	
OFTEN	0.8	8.5	2.1	1.0	
ALOT	0.2	4.2	0.8	0.4	
N	13	210	128	27	481
%	2.7	43.7	26.6	5.6	

2. Criteria for evaluating writing

Teachers and administrators responses differed very little except that teachers were more specific. For both groups, neatness and legibility appears to be the most important criteria.

The following are representative of the range of criteria employed: slope (consistency of), size, shape of letters, space,

spacing of words and formation of individual letters. Some teachers also suggested that pencil grip, legibilitity at speed and posture were important.

3. Effectiveness in teaching current syllabus at July 1984

Table 5: Teacher effectiveness in teaching current syllabus

	TEACHERS	ADMIN.
VERY EFFECTIVE	8.3	4.0
QUITE EFFECTIVE	52.3	51.0
SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	32.7	44.0
A LITTLE EFFECTIVE	5.7	0
NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE	1.0	1.0

A relatively low number of respondents see the current teaching of handwriting to be very effective with a higher percentage (40 per cent) seeing it as being marginally so. Administrators rate it slightly lower than the teachers do. It should be noted that the current syllabus refers to the 1974 edition and is soon to be superseded.

SECTION D: THE IMPORTANCE OF HANDWRITING

Table 6 illustrates gross time allocations by teachers and administrators to formal and indirect methods of teaching handwriting, as presented by respondents in July 1984. The methods were defined in the questionnaire as follows:

Formal teaching describes handwriting lessons taken with the whole class, small group or individuals aimed specifically to improve the children's handwriting.

Indirect teaching describes supervising, correcting and remediating children's handwriting in the general course of the day and within some other activity or lesson (e.g. social studies, mathematics).

Table 6: Time spent all teachers and administrators

	Formal		Indirect	
Time Per Week	T	A	T	A
None	13.4	19.0	0.8	0
30 mins or less	38.1	47.6	37.1	40.9
30 - 60 mins	31.5	28.6	31.7	31.8
60 - 90 mins	12.4	4.8	13.3	22.7
90+ mins	4.6	-	17.1	4.5

Some 13 per cent of teachers and 19 per cent of administrators

reported that no time was spent on formal teaching. Teachers allocated more time for direct instruction than administrators. Approximately a quarter of both groups saw indirect instruction occupying 60 or more minutes each week.

Table 7: Time spent by years

	NONE		LESS 30		30-60		60-90		90+		
	FOR	IND	FOR	IND	FOR	IND	FOR	IND	FOR	IND	
*LRT	0.6	0.2	0.6	1.4	1.2	0.2	0.2	0.6	0	0.2	13 2.5
LOWER	0	0	8.6	11.4	18.0	14.1	11.6	7.6	4.6	8.8	214 42.9
MIDDLE	3.4	0	14.8	10.4	8.8	9.0	0.4	3.6	0	4.2	137 27.5
UPPER	9.4	0.6	14.0	13.9	3.4	7.4	0.2	1.4	0	3.8	135 27.1
N	67	4	190	185	157	158	62	66	23	85	498
%	13.4	0.8	38.1	37.1	31.1	31.7	12.4	13.3	4.6	17.1	

*LRT - Local relieving teachers

Table 7 shows the allocation of time to teaching formally and indirectly by year. The year dimension is grouped into local relieving teachers (LRT), lower, middle and upper. It is interesting to note that lower school teachers (years 1 to 3) teach handwriting formally from 30-60 minutes a week (18.0) which is significantly higher than upper school teachers (years 5-7). Some 10 per cent of teachers in the upper school stated that they never teach handwriting formally. Generally time spent on indirect teaching is lower also in the upper grades.

Insert Table 8 here

There was almost unanimous agreement amongst the respondents on the importance of handwriting with nearly three-quarters assigning it a high or extremely high rating. Those ranking it extremely high felt that most other teachers valued good handwriting performance lower than they did.

There was considerable agreement across the responses from members of the administrative teams. Teachers see Assistant Junior Principals placing greater emphasis on handwriting than the other administrators which is to be expected from the data on time allocations (Table 7).

Both teachers and administrators felt that children place less importance on handwriting than they do.

The perceptions held by teachers and administrators of the inspector's attitude to handwriting closely agree, but principal and deputy administrator responses indicate that they see themselves attaching greater importance to handwriting than inspectors do. The perceived rating for the inspectorate virtually mirrors the teachers' own rankings in the first column of Table 8.

Parents are seen by teachers to place a lower emphasis on handwriting than they do themselves but administrators feel that

parents place a higher importance on handwriting than accorded to them by the teachers.

Table 9: Emphasis given to the quality of handwriting in various subject areas by teachers and administrators

	Mathematics		Written Expression		Science		Social Studies		Health		Spelling	
	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A
EX HIGH	15.3	16.8	16.1	19.8	10.1	11.0	11.5	11.1	7.7	9.0	18.5	19.0
HIGH	47.3	51.5	47.3	62.4	47.8	46.0	54.2	55.6	42.3	40.0	54.6	59.0
MEDIUM	32.6	26.7	28.4	16.8	39.4	42.0	32.6	32.3	43.7	44.0	24.7	21.0
LOW	4.6	5.0	7.6	1.0	2.5	1.0	1.6	1.0	5.5	4.0	2.2	1.0
NOT IMP.	0.2	0	0.6	0	0.2	0	0.2	0	0.8	3.0	0	0

Greater importance is assigned to handwriting in the 'skills', mathematics, written expression and spelling, than in science, social studies and health. Within the three 'non-skills' subjects the respondents assigned least importance to handwriting in health education. Whether the responses indicate a ranking of actual subjects or that the quality of script is less important in health, science and social studies would require further investigation to answer.

SECTION E: FEELINGS ABOUT THE CURRENT SYLLABUS*

Table 10: Feelings about the current handwriting syllabus

		T	A
(a) The print style is relatively easy for children to master	YES	85.1	82.7
	NO	14.6	17.3
(b) The cursive writing style is relatively easy for children to master	YES	44.5	36.7
	NO	55.5	63.3
(c) The current cursive style helps children to write legibly at speed	YES	33.9	24.5
	NO	66.1	75.5

A significant majority of the respondents reported that the current print style was easily mastered by children. They were less enthusiastic about the cursive both in respect to ease of mastery and aiding legibility at speed. Administrators were more critical than the teachers about the suitability of the current cursive script.

* This refers to the 1974 syllabus currently used in Queensland schools, but soon to be superseded.

Table 11: Usefulness of the Components of the Current Guidelines*

	LEGIBIL-ITY	SPEED	SELF EVAL-UATION	MEANING-FUL AC-TIVITIES	POSTURE	LEFT HAND-EDNESS	RELAXA-TION	PRES OF SYLLABUS IN STAGES	LESSON PLANS
EX. USEFUL	6.8	3.4	6.6	8.0	14.6	8.2	6.7	9.6	8.2
QUITE USEFUL	36.0	24.5	31.2	30.5	49.0	31.3	31.1	38.7	35.8
SOME USE	47.5	49.9	43.0	44.7	31.8	44.5	45.7	39.3	39.9
NOT MUCH USE	8.3	19.0	16.4	14.3	4.0	12.5	13.3	10.9	14.0
NO USE	1.4	3,2	2.8	2.5	0.4	3.5	3.2	1.5	2.2

Respondents reported that the notes on posture were the most useful, those on speed writing the least.

* 1974 Syllabus

SECTION F: THE NEW HANDWRITING SYLLABUS

Both teachers and administrators ranged in their opinions about the changes to the syllabus, but it was clear from the responses that both groups viewed the new syllabus and script favourably. It should be stressed that at the time of the survey the principal source of knowledge was limited to the Department's publication 'What's New in the Teaching of Handwriting'. The positive climate is exemplified, with comments like 'it's a good idea', 'it's worth a try' and 'it's about time'. Teachers concern for their students and with practicality was evident in comments such as "the new script would make the transition from print to cursive much easier," and the "new script simplifies the formation of letters".

Teachers were favourable to the claim that the new script promoted writing legibly at speed. One teacher's statement encapsulates a major strength of the new script in the eyes of teachers and administrators.

> If the style is easier for children to grasp, and enables them to maintain a good standard of neatness and legibility at speed, the change will be good.

A number of upper school teachers also applauded the change on the grounds that "the majority of year 7 students seem to prefer to print rather than write, if they can do this at speed, then let's do it." The development of a more uniform script throughout Australia was another reason for a favourable reaction.

While most teachers and administrators were favourably disposed toward the new script, there was some resistance from a number of respondents. Firstly, the change was seen as unnecessary, with preference being for the current style. Whether this was in terms of aesthetics or pedagogy was not articulated. Secondly, as one respondent expressed it this was "just another example of change for the sake of change". Finally, another explained "probably because of my age, I can see no reason for the change."

On the whole then most teachers were supportive of the change, but some were adamant that they be given more information and inservice, before they were expected to teach it. Indeed, a number of teachers maintained that they had little information and that "they would need to know more about the changes before the program is implemented at their level". It should be stressed that attempts were made to meet these needs. The effectiveness of those attempts will be the subject of later reports.

The problems perceived by teachers and administrators toward a different handwriting style appear to be of two orders. Firstly, individual problems experienced by teachers themselves and secondly, organisational problems which relate to the whole school.

1. Individual Problems

Feeling confident and competent in using a new script seems to be a common concern articulated by both teachers and administrators. Comments like the following are representative.

"It will be hard not to revert back to the old style"

"I have not learned the new handwriting style myself. At present I teach the style that I was taught and I think it will be hard to change totally to the new style and be/feel just as capable."

"Remembering to use the new style when writing on the blackboard"

While many teachers envisaged having no problems with the change, there was a feeling of ambivalence with a number of teachers suggesting that the new script represented "extra work in an already crowded syllabus." In terms of their practice, a number of teachers felt that they would "have to develop commitment and knowledge to support the change."

The following comment epitomises the view of most teachers.

"Formal lessons O.K. Everyday use will require a huge amount of effort on my part."

2. Organisational level

Organisational problems related to the whole school. In particular, a number of teachers and administrators working in

multiple age grouping expressed concern that "teachers will need to teach both styles for years 1 and 2". Changes to staffing was seen as a possible problem with teachers joining the staff during the year who are unfamiliar with the script and are required, to teach lower grades. Also the concern was expressed that local district relievers not conversant with the new script would take classes and create some confusion for the pupils. Finally, it was felt by some that "parents could become confused with varying grades using different styles."

The general sentiment expressed by both teachers and administrators was that there would be no problem as long as sufficient assistance was given to teachers. Most significantly, teacher inservice programs were seen as being essential to the successful take up of the new handwriting syllabus. Other activities suggested include staff meetings, activities with both teachers and parents and finally 'dry-run' activities with classes.

Table 12: Publications read about the new syllabus

	NO	YES
(a) Teaching of Handwriting: A Handbook	65.2	34.8
(b) What's New in the Teaching of Handwriting	48.3	51.7
(c) Articles in the Courier Mail	52.5	47.5
(d) Other	91.4	8.6

Half the respondents had read the departmental publication 'What's New in the Teaching of Handwriting' and the Courier Mail

articles. The response to 'What's New in the Teaching of Handwriting' is somewhat disappointing given its purpose, to acquaint teachers with the proposed changes, its distribution to schools and the attention given to making it attractive and readable. A third of the respondents reported having read the handbook but at the time of the survey its distribution had been limited only to administrators and teachers attending seminars on the handwriting syllabus. (Proportionally, this was a very small number).

3. Guidelines

Respondents were asked to state what they wanted to be included in the guidelines to be published with the new syllabus. While the suggestions were broad, it is possible to categorise them into three areas: overviews, content (i.e. practical information) and evaluation.

(a) Overviews

Both teachers and administrators were concerned that information be included regarding "the philosophy of and reasons for the change". A broad overview or yearly plan which presented the developmental stages children pass through was also favoured. A number of teachers felt it was essential that they be provided with clear and general expectations for each year level plus information concerning "year level requirements in progressing from alphabet to cursive."

(b) Content

Teachers stated that the guidelines should include information concerning:

- posture
  - pencil grip
  - left handedness
- choice of implements
- pre writing exercises
- letter sequence - which letters to attempt first
- sequence of letter strokes
- letter formation
  - sample learning experiences for each year level
  - ideas for method of introduction and follow up
  - joining techniques
  - activities to develop fluency
  - related letters
  - size, shape, slope
  - specific changes to individual letters
  - special activities (exercises that assist in the development of new letter shapes)
  - specific problems previously encountered and ways to over come them
  - which letters to attempt first and the joins in cursive writing

Teachers also indicated that examples of lesson plans for each stage would be useful, as would "ideal passages against which students' work could be compared".

While most teachers indicated that the guidelines should be specific, a number of them suggested that the current syllabus was adequate, or that "the new guide should not be as extensive, providing enough information as the least experienced teacher finds necessary".

(c) Evaluation

Evaluation was another area where teachers requested detailed guidelines. They required information concerning criteria which would be used to evaluate students' writing for each stage and ideas on evaluation as in the old syllabus. Also they wanted ways to judge the development of individual writing styles and their development.

4. Resources seen to be necessary

This section presents the material and human resources which should be available to teachers.

(a) Material Resources

Table 13: Teachers perceptions of material resources which might assist with the planning (PL) and teaching (TEA) of handwriting

Material Resources

	Syllabus Guidelines		Examples		Tapes		Practice Books		Demo Lessons	
	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA
HELPS A LOT	41.6	34.1	44.7	29.9	27.2	31.0	44.5	58.6	31.2	39.9
HELPS	50.6	51.6	38.0	44.4	51.7	47.4	37.9	31.8	47.0	46.6
NEITHER HELPS NOR HINDERS	7.2	12.7	0.2	29.9	20.3	20.6	16.4	8.0	20.4	12.3
HINDERS	0.6	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
HINDERS A LOT	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.4	0.2

Practice books for children, examples of teachers programs and syllabus guidelines are nominated as ways with the most potential for assisting with planning. Practice books and demonstration lessons are favoured by the respondents to help with teaching.

(b) Human Resources

Insert Table 14 here

In respect to planning respondents nominated resources external to the school as the most helpful. One day inservice courses (56.5 per cent) and advisory teachers (30.5 per cent) are nominated as the most helpful more often than any single member of the administrative team. This may be due in part to respondents splitting their responses to the administrative team in contrast to the single response to 'inservice course' and 'advisory teacher'. Alternatively, it might indicate that a significant number of teachers do not view school administrators as a source of great help in respect to the planning and teaching of handwriting.

However the positive responses are interpreted in respect to school administrators, the neutral (neither helps nor hinders) and the negative responses warrant attention. Some 40 to 50 per cent of teachers indicated that the members of the administrative team exercise either no or a negative effect on the planning and teaching of handwriting in their classrooms which is contrary to the self-perceptions reported by the administrators (Table 16).

Table 15: Administrators perceptions of material resources which might assist teachers with their planning and teaching of handwriting

Material Resources

	Syllabus Guidelines		Examples		Tapes		Practice Books		Demo Lessons	
	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA
HELPS A LOT	72.3	52.0	52.9	46.5	37.4	44.4	50.5	70.0	28.1	45.4
HELPS	25.7	40.8	42.9	37.4	47.5	48.5	34.7	26.0	53.1	49.5
NEITHER HELPS NOR HINDERS	1.0	6.1	3.9	5.2	14.1	9.1	13.9	3.7	18.8	3.1
HINDERS	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.7	0	1.0
HINDERS A LOT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The administrators attribute a higher value to syllabus guidelines and program examples as sources of assistance for teachers than the teachers do themselves, and also to practice books in teaching. However, differences between teachers and administrators are more significant in respect to the respective perceived value of the various human resources than in respect to the material resources.

Table 16 here

Whereas administrators perceived themselves as major sources of assistance to their teachers, the teachers assign them a far lower status. The advisory teacher services are seen to be of greater help by administrators than by teachers. While both groups of respondents

agree on the contribution of inservice courses to both planning and teaching. The differences between the perceptions of the two groups warrants further investigation in order to establish causes and effects of such divergencies.

SECTION G: CONCLUSIONS

1. The Current Teaching of Handwriting*

   (a) Teacher demonstration on the blackboard and in books is the commonest method used.

   (b) Both the amount of time spent on formal and indirect teaching of handwriting decreases significantly in the middle and upper school.

   (c) Children's practice books are strongly supported by the respondents for both the planning and teaching phases.

   (d) Evaluation is based on product and process criteria - size, shape, spacing (words and letters), posture, pencil grip, letter forming.

2. Importance

   (a) There is nearly unanimous agreement on the importance of children learning to write legibly.

   (b) The importance attached to handwriting is uneven across subjects.

   (c) Administrative team member responses were in close agreement on most issues.

   (d) Teachers feel that both children and parents place less importance on writing than they do.

3. Current Syllabus*

   (a) A majority of respondents agreed that:

* 1974 Syllabus

(i) the current print style was easily mastered by children.

(ii) the current cursive style was neither easily mastered nor facilitated legibility at speed.

(b) All of the sections in the notes were useful with 'posture' the most useful and 'speed' the least.

4. Perceptions of the New Syllabus

(a) Reactions to changing the syllabus range from full accord, to reserved judgement, to resigned acceptance.

(b) The majority of respondents were favourably disposed to the new syllabus.

(c) There is some lack of confidence amongst teachers about mastering the script sufficiently to use it regularly in class work.

(d) Organisational problems projected include: multiple-age classes, working on the 'old' and 'new' scripts concurrently, confusion amongst parents, teachers on transfer and local relief not being familiar with the script.

(e) Guidelines should include rationale, content overview, criteria to guide expectation setting, information on and examples of correct letter formation, shape, posture, etc., sample lessons and evaluation.

(f) The provision of effective inservice education is held to be esential by administrators and teachers.

(g) Inservice education should include short courses, advisory visits and in school support.

(h) Inservice education through materials should include guidelines and practice books.

(i) Teachers and administrators hold significantly different views on the value of the in-school assistance given by principals, deputies and assistant principals.

(j) Parents are seen both by teachers and administrators as 'hinderers' rather than as 'helpers' and further study needs to be undertaken to clarify this perception.

Table 8: Importance of handwriting as perceived by teachers and administrators

	Self		Most Other Teachers		Principal		Deputy		Assn Jun Principal		Assn Sen Principal		Children		Inspectors		Children	
	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A
EX HIGH	17.6	-	6.5	4.1	25.3	30.4	25.6	28.6	29.1	-	20.6	42.1	2.4	1.0	18.0	19.8	10.0	16.8
HIGH	54.7	-	50.0	55.7	52.0	58.2	50.4	51.8	55.6	-	44.1	42.1	26.7	25.0	54.6	52.1	43.5	51.5
MED	26.6	-	41.8	40.2	20.9	10.8	20.9	19.6	12.6	-	32.4	15.8	59.2	59.0	23.4	22.9	41.0	26.7
LOW	1.2	-	1.3	0	1.7	0	1.9	0	.7	-	2.9	0	11.2	15.0	3.6	5.2	4.9	0
NOT	.2	-	.2	0	.2	0	.8	0	0	-	0	0	.4	0	.2	0	.4	0

Table 14: Teachers' perceptions of human resources which might assist with the planning and teaching of handwriting

Human Resources

	Principal		Deputy Principal		Ass. Sen. Principal		Ass. Jun. Principal		Parents		Inspectors		Advisory Teachers		Inservice	
	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA
HELPS A LOT	11.3	0	11.2	12.9	10.7	8.1	14.9	8.1	4.9	4.9	5.9	5.2	30.5	10.5	56.5	53.6
HELPS	48.5	41.1	44.1	42.2	44.9	41.9	45.4	41.9	10.2	12.8	35.5	32.1	50.5	43.1	31.1	31.5
NEITHER HELPS NOR HINDERS	35.8	42.6	39.5	38.2	38.3	42.9	34.9	42.9	57.4	50.1	50.6	53.5	17.0	40.2	9.8	12.2
HINDERS	2.9	5.1	3.3	4.4	3.1	4.5	2.8	4.5	17.7	20.9	3.6	3.6	1.2	4.4	1.4	1.2
HINDERS A LOT	1.5	2.1	1.8	2.4	3.1	2.5	2.0	2.5	9.8	11.3	4.4	5.7	.8	1.9	1.2	1.4

Table 16: Administrators' perceptions of human resources which might assist teachers with the planning and teaching of handwriting

Human Resources

	Principal		Deputy Principal		Ass. Sen. Principal		Ass. Jun. Principal		Parents		Inspectors		Advisory Teachers		Inservice	
	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA	PL	TEA
HELPS A LOT	25.5	19.4	23.4	16.9	23.9	20.0	31.4	22.9	2.1	5.1	12.2	13.0	45.0	37.3	63.6	56.0
HELPS	63.8	64.3	63.5	64.9	65.7	61.4	61.4	61.4	17.9	21.4	57.1	52.0	49.0	52.9	32.3	36.0
NEITHER HELPS NOR HINDERS	8.5	13.3	9.5	15.6	9.0	17.1	7.1	15.7	58.9	51.0	24.5	29.0	6.0	8.8	3.0	7.0
HINDERS	2.1	3.1	2.7	2.6	1.5	1.4	0	0	14.7	14.3	6.1	5.0	0	1.0	1.0	1.0
HINDERS A LOT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.3	8.2	0	1.0	0	0	0	0

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE I

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Year in which you completed your initial training. 19____

2. Location of initial training institution.
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

Queensland	1
Other Australian State	2
Overseas	3

3. Highest qualification held in education.
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

Teacher's Certificate	1
Diploma of Teaching	2
Diploma in Education	3
Bachelor of Education	4
Bachelor of Ed. Stds.	5
Masters	6
Other (please specify)	
. . . . .	

4. Number of years you have been teaching in your present school.
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

Less than 1 year	1
1 to 2 years	2
3 to 4 years	3
5 or more years	4

5. Please indicate with a cross the grade or grades that you have taught full-time each year since 1980. If you taught more than one grade in a year (eg. multiple or composite grades) cross a box for each grade taught. If you were on relieving staff please tick the column headed RT.

Grade Taught

Year	Pre-Schl	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	RT
1980									
1981									
1982									
1983									
1984									

SECTION B: TEACHING HANDWRITING

This section seeks information about how you teach handwriting formally and/or indirectly.

Formal teaching describes handwriting lessons taken with the whole class, small groups or individuals aimed specifically to improve the children's handwriting.

Indirect teaching describes supervising, correcting and remediating children's handwriting in the general course of the day and within some other activity or lesson (e.g. social studies, mathematics).

6. Approximately how much time each week do you spend on the formal teaching of handwriting?
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

None	1
30 mins or less	2
Between 30 and 60 mins	3
Between 60 and 90 mins	4
90 plus mins	5

7. Approximately how much time each week do you spend on the indirect teaching of handwriting?
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

None	1
30 mins or less	2
31 to 60 mins	3
60 to 90 mins	4
90 plus mins	5

8. Listed below are some common ways used to develop children's handwriting skills. How often do you use each of the following?

The scale is
5 = a lot
4 = often
3 = sometimes
2 = seldom
1 = never

(Please write in the appropriate numeral)

a) demonstration on the blackboard [ ]
b) demonstration and correction in children's books [ ]
c) copy books [ ]
d) wall charts [ ]
e) cards [ ]
f) duplicated sheets [ ]
g) other (please specify).....
.....

9. Please list the criteria that you use when you evaluate children's handwriting in your class (e.g. size, slope, neatness).

SECTION C: THE IMPORTANCE OF HANDWRITING

10. From your viewpoint gauge the importance given to handwriting by the following people in your school.

The scale is
5 = extremely high importance
4 = high importance
3 = medium importance
2 = low importance
1 = no importance

(Please write in the appropriate numeral)

Self	[ ]
Most other teachers at my school	[ ]
Principal	[ ]
Deputy Principal (if applicable)	[ ]
Assistant Principal Junior (if applicable)	[ ]
Assistant Principal Senior (if applicable)	[ ]
Children	[ ]
Inspector(s)	[ ]
Parents	[ ]

11. The emphasis given to the quality of handwriting by teachers may vary from subject to subject. Please indicate the importance you give to handwriting when teaching each of the following. Use the same scale as in question 10 (5 = extremely high importance, 1 = no importance).
(Please write in the appropriate numeral)

Mathematics	[ ]
Written expression	[ ]
Science	[ ]
Social Studies	[ ]
Health	[ ]
Spelling	[ ]

SECTION D: YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE CURRENT HANDWRITING SYLLABUS

12. Please indicate your response to each of the following statements about the style of printing and cursive writing laid down in the current handwriting syllabus by ticking YES or NO.

(a) The print style is relatively easy for children to master. YES NO

(b) The cursive writing style is relatively easy for children to master. YES NO

(c) The current cursive style helps children to write legibly at speed. YES NO

13. In teaching handwriting how useful are the following components of the current handwriting syllabus.

The scale is 5 = extremely useful
4 = quite useful
3 = some use
2 = not much use
1 = no use at all

(Please write in the appropriate numeral)

Notes about legibility	[ ]
speed	[ ]
self evaluation	[ ]
meaningful activities	[ ]
posture	[ ]
left handedness	[ ]
relaxation	[ ]
Presentation of the syllabus in stages	[ ]
Lesson plans for guided writing lessons	[ ]

14.a) How effective do you think you are at teaching the current handwriting syllabus? Please circle one:

very effective	1
quite effective	2
somewhat effective	3
a little effective	4
not at all effective	5

b) Please explain briefly the reasons for your choice.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION E: THE NEW HANDWRITING SYLLABUS

The Department of Education, Queensland is introducing a new handwriting syllabus into schools starting in 1985 with year 1 children.

15. Please indicate the publications you have read about the new syllabus.

Teaching of Handwriting: A Handbook ____

What's New in the Teaching of Handwriting ____

Articles in the Courier Mail ____

Other (please specify) .....

.....

16. How do you feel about the changes to the handwriting syllabus to be introduced from 1985?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. What problems do you see yourself having in teaching a different handwriting style?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

18. Listed below are some factors which might assist you with the *planning* and *teaching* of handwriting.
With respect to each please indicate to what degree each may help or hinder you.
Please work down each column, that is, respond to how these factors might influence your planning, and then how they might influence your teaching of writing.
Please complete both columns.
The scale is 5 = helps a lot
4 = helps
3 = neither helps nor hinders
2 = hinders
1 = hinders a lot

		Planning Handwriting	Teaching Handwriting
(a)	Syllabus guidelines	[ ]	[ ]
(b)	Examples of teacher's written programs	[ ]	[ ]
(c)	Video tapes on style and method of handwriting	[ ]	[ ]
(d)	Practice books for children	[ ]	[ ]
(e)	Demonstration lessons	[ ]	[ ]
(f)	Assistance from advisory teachers	[ ]	[ ]
(g)	principal	[ ]	[ ]
(h)	deputy principal	[ ]	[ ]
(i)	assistant principal junior	[ ]	[ ]
(j)	assistant principal senior	[ ]	[ ]
(k)	One day inservice course on the new syllabus	[ ]	[ ]
(l)	Parents	[ ]	[ ]
(m)	Inspectors	[ ]	[ ]

Thank you for completing BOTH COLUMNS.

19. In a new handwriting syllabus what particular guidelines do you think should be involved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. Please make any other comments which you think will be helpful in introducing the new handwriting syllabus.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. For data processing purposes we need the class of your present school.

My present school is a

(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

Class 1
Class 2
Class 3
Class 4
Class 5

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' QUESTIONNAIRE I

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Year in which you completed your initial training. 19 ___

2. Gender female _____ male ____

3. Location of initial training institution.
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

Queensland	1
Other Australian State	2
Overseas	3

4. Highest qualification held in education.
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

Teacher's Certificate	1
Diploma of Teaching	2
Diploma in Education	3
Bachelor of Education	4
Bachelor of Ed. Std.	5
Masters	6
Other (please specify)	

_____

5. Substantive position.
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

Principal	1
Deputy	2
Assistant Deputy (Junior)	3
Assistant Deputy (Senior)	4
Other (please specify)	

_____

6. Number of years you have held this position in the Department of Education.
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

1 year or less	1
2 to 5 years	2
6 to 10 years	3
11 years or more	4

7. Number of years you have held this position at your present school.
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

Less than 1 year	1
1 to 2 years	2
3 to 4 years	3
5 or more years	4

8. Class of school.

(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

Class 1
Class 2
Class 3
Class 4
Class 5

9. Number of full-time classroom teachers on staff. _____

10. Number of children enrolled at the first Friday of this month. _____

SECTION B

This section applies only to administrators who are also teaching full-time (or nearly full-time).

11. Please indicate with a cross the grade or grades that you have taught full-time each year since 1980. If you taught more than one grade in a year (eg. multiple or composite grades) cross a box for each grade taught. If you were on relieving staff please tick the column headed RT.

Grade Taught

Year	Pre-School	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	RT
1980									
1981									
1982									
1983									
1984									

12. *Formal teaching describes handwriting lessons taken with the whole class, small groups or individuals aimed specifically to improve the children's handwriting.*

Indirect teaching describes supervising, correcting and remediating children's handwriting in the general course of the day and within some other activity or lesson (e.g. social studies, mathematics).

Approximately how much time each week do you spend on the formal teaching of handwriting?
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

None 1
30 mins or less 2
Between 30 and 60 mins 3
Between 60 and 90 mins 4
90 plus mins 5

13. Approximately how much time each week do you spend on the indirect teaching of handwriting?
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

None	1
30 mins or less	2
31 to 60 mins	3
60 to 90 mins	4
90 plus mins	5

14. Listed below are some common ways used to develop children's handwriting skills. How often do you use each of the following?

The scale is
5 = a lot
4 = often
3 = sometimes
2 = seldom
1 = never

(Please write in the appropriate numeral)

a) demonstration on the blackboard [ ]
b) demonstration and correction in children's books [ ]
c) copy books [ ]
d) wall charts [ ]
e) cards [ ]
f) duplicated sheets [ ]
g) other (please specify) [ ]

_____

15. Please list the criteria that you use when you evaluate children's handwriting in your class (e.g. size, slope, neatness).

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION C: THE IMPORTANCE OF HANDWRITING

16. From your viewpoint gauge the importance given to handwriting by the following people in your school.

The scale is
5 = extremely high importance
4 = high importance
3 = medium importance
2 = low importance
1 = no importance

Principal	[ ]
Deputy Principal (if applicable)	[ ]
Assistant Principal (if applicable)	[ ]
Most teachers at my school	[ ]
Children	[ ]
Inspector(s)	[ ]
Parents	[ ]

17. The emphasis given to the quality of handwriting may vary from subject to subject. Please indicate the importance you give to handwriting in each of the following subjects. Use the same scale as in question 16 (5 = extremely high importance, 1 = no importance).
(Please write in the appropriate numeral)

Mathematics	[ ]
Written expression	[ ]
Science	[ ]
Social Studies	[ ]
Health	[ ]
Spelling	[ ]

SECTION D: YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE CURRENT HANDWRITING SYLLABUS

18. Please indicate your response to each of the following statements about the style of printing and cursive writing laid down in the current handwriting syllabus by ticking YES or NO.

(a) The print style is relatively easy for children to master.	YES	NO
(b) The cursive writing style is relatively easy for children to master.	YES	NO
(c) The current cursive style helps children to write legibly at speed.	YES	NO

19. In teaching handwriting how useful for teachers are the following components of the current handwriting syllabus?

The scale is 5 = extremely useful
4 = quite useful
3 = some use
2 = not much use
1 = no use at all

(Please write in the appropriate numeral)

(a) Notes about legibility [ ]
speed [ ]
self evaluation [ ]
meaningful activities [ ]
posture [ ]
left handedness [ ]
relaxation [ ]

(b) Presentation of the syllabus in stages [ ]

(c) Lesson plans for guided writing lessons [ ]

20. a) How effectively do you think handwriting is taught in your school?
(Please circle the appropriate numeral)

very effectively 1
quite effectively 2
somewhat effectively 3
a little effectively 4
not at all effectively 5

b) Please explain briefly the reasons for your choice.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION E: THE NEW HANDWRITING SYLLABUS

The Department of Education, Queensland is introducing a new handwriting syllabus into schools starting in 1985 with year 1 children.

21. Please indicate the publications you have read about the new syllabus.

Teaching of Handwriting: A Handbook _____
What's New in the Teaching of Handwriting _____
Articles in the Courier Mail _____
Other (please specify) _____

_____

22. How do you feel about the changes to the handwriting syllabus to be introduced from 1985?

23. What problems do you see the introduction of the new syllabus causing you?

24. What problems do you see the introduction of the new syllabus causing teachers in your school?

25. In a new handwriting syllabus what particular guidelines do you think should be included?

7.

26. Listed below are some factors which might assist teachers with the planning and teaching of handwriting.
With respect to each please indicate to what degree each may help or hinder.
Please work down each column, that is, respond to how these factors might influence the *planning* and then how they might influence the *teaching* of writing.
Please complete both columns.
The scale is: 5 = helps a lot
4 = helps
3 = neither helps nor hinders
2 = hinders
1 = hinders a lot

		Planning Handwriting	Teaching Handwriting
(a)	Syllabus guidelines	[ ]	[ ]
(b)	Examples of teachers' writing programs	[ ]	[ ]
(c)	Video tapes on style and method of handwriting	[ ]	[ ]
(d)	Practice books for children	[ ]	[ ]
(e)	Demonstration lessons	[ ]	[ ]
(f)	Assistance from advisory teachers	[ ]	[ ]
(g)	principal	[ ]	[ ]
(h)	deputy principal	[ ]	[ ]
(i)	assistant principal junior	[ ]	[ ]
(j)	assistant principal senior	[ ]	[ ]
(k)	One day inservice course on the new syllabus	[ ]	[ ]
(l)	Parents	[ ]	[ ]
(m)	Inspectors	[ ]	[ ]

Thank you for completing BOTH COLUMNS.

27. Please make any other comments which you think will be helpful in introducing the new handwriting syllabus.

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION